

Get Trained and Take Action!

NOW is the time to register for one of three regional SIC trainings scheduled for this spring. *SICs in ACTION!* training conferences will be held on February 26 in Mt. Pleasant, March 5 in Greenville and March 19 in Columbia. The agenda for each conference is the same regardless of location with one exception: the winner of the Dick and Tunko Riley School Improvement Award will be announced in Columbia on March 19. The fall conference series focused on

the basics of con-

vening an effective school improvement council. The spring agenda will provide councils with new information on current issues for schools and innovative ideas for solving problems.

Conference participants report that they prefer the option of day-long regional trainings in place of one large state level training and/or shorter district level trainings. Conducted in three locations, the fall regional conferences drew SIC members from over half the school districts in the state. This change in service delivery is contributing to the SC-SIC goal to increase access to the training for SIC members. Those attending indicated on their evaluations that the conference was a good use of their time and the information was valuable to their role on the SIC.

Fall workshops were divided into basic content for new members (membership,

effective meeting techniques, organization strategies, bylaws), and challenging information about strategic planning, parent involvement and advocacy targeted for preparing SIC members for multiple roles. SIC members are being asked to participate in the design of a plan for the next five years and pay attention to the proposed policies and legislation that will be debated during the next six months that could affect those plans.



SIC members work on strategic planning at the Greenville regional conference.

councils, they can turn their attention to issues affecting school improvement and decide which programs and policies to implement in their schools. Moving on to this higher level of activity and *action* will be the focus of the spring SIC conference series. Some of the topics to be addressed during the conferences include truancy, bullying, working with administrators, current legislation, and school nutrition and physical activity.

Don't miss this chance to receive new information on current issues pertinent to your role on the SIC and to network with others from your region. Turn to pages three and four for registration information. We look forward to meeting you in your region of the state this spring!

- Dr. Jean M. Norman
-Cassie Barber

SICs – Advocates for Public Education

*By Patrick Cobb**

It is important to note that as a member of an SIC you have a voice and you can use that voice to

advocate for South Carolina's public schools. During its annual fall planning session the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees, with assistance from a



Patrick Cobb

law firm experienced in school issues, developed a set of guidelines (see page 5) regarding advocacy for school improvement councils. The guidelines were developed in response to requests from a number of SICs from around the state. Several members had questions regarding ethics and the relationship between SICs and policy makers.

Your local school board has a responsibility to convene a school improvement council in each school in the district and to see that they operate in an effective fashion. Check with your district contact to see if your school board has developed a policy on SICs and advocacy in your district.

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SC-SIC Elects New Trustees

Two new members have been elected to the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees. We welcome the experience and expertise they bring to this volunteer board. SICs are encouraged to access board members as a special resource; a complete board list along with their contact information can be found on the SC-SIC Web site www.ed.sc.edu/sic.



Nancy Hanley is an experienced educator who is currently the English Language Arts Academic Assistance Teacher for grades 3 – 5 at Homeland Park Elementary School in Anderson. Mrs. Hanley holds a Masters in Education degree from Clemson University and is involved in a variety of activities ranging from higher education to her community including a mentoring program for students. She serves on the Homeland Park SIC.

Jeff Nicholson is a community activist who is very involved with the Saluda Trail Middle SIC in Rock Hill. He has participated on a variety of school and district level committees concerned with playground equipment, grassroots advocacy, school reassignment, a robotics team and more. Mr. Nicholson is very proud of his work with the SIC that resulted in the passage of a new standard code of dress policy. He is employed by Laboratory Design & Equipment, Inc.



“Advocates”

Continued from page 2

A key to effective advocacy within your school district is to make sure that at least one member of your SIC is present at every school board meeting. Consider asking each member of your council to commit to attending at least one meeting a year. Provide SIC members with name tags and make sure they sign in at all meetings they attend. Let people know you serve on the SIC; you will be amazed at how much attention you can generate.

I serve on the River Springs Elementary SIC in School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties. Working together with other SICs in the district we were able to develop a nonpartisan district-wide voter's guide for our recent school board elections. The guide was distributed to voters in the district by parent groups and community members, and published in a local newspaper. This unique project created quite a buzz in the district and was an effective tool to engage local voters in the race. Use the guidelines as a foundation and then get involved!

** Patrick Cobb serves as chair of the SC-SIC Board of Trustees*



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USC College of Education
Wardlaw Bldg., Suite 001
Columbia, SC 29208

Phone: 803-777-7658
Toll Free: 800-868-2232
E-mail: sic@gwm.sc.edu
Web address: www.ed.sc.edu/sic

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SICs IN ACTION!

2005 Spring Regional Conferences

Locations and Dates

February 26 - Mt. Pleasant

Holiday Inn - Patriot's Point

250 Johnnie Dobbs Blvd. (off US 17)

Call 843-884-6000 for directions

March 5 - Greenville

Greenville Marriott

One Parkway East, I-85, Michelin Exit

Call 864-297-0300 for directions

March 19 - Columbia

Columbiana Hotel & Conference Center (formerly Sheraton)

2100 Bush River Road, Exit 63

Call 803-731-0300 for directions

Winner of the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award to be announced

Conference Agenda - All Locations

8:30 am	Registration and Coffee
9:00 am	General Session
9:30 am	Concurrent Workshops
10:45 am	Break
11:00 am	Concurrent Workshops
12:15 am	Luncheon - Speaker
1:30 pm	Adjourn (2:00 pm in Columbia)

Workshop Sampler

Each conference participant will attend two workshop sessions during the conference. SICs are encouraged to have members attend different sessions and compare notes later. At press time sessions were planned on the following topics:

- ***Truancy and Drop-out Prevention*** – learn about the new truancy guidelines and strategies your school can use to help keep our children in school.
- ***Nutrition and Physical Activity*** – have you heard about the new recommendations from State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum's special task force on nutrition and physical activity for our students? Each school needs to develop its own wellness plan.
- ***Collaboration*** – would you like some tips on developing a winning relationship between the SIC chair and the principal?
- ***Advocacy and Governmental Relations*** – some SIC members participate on Governmental Relations Committees and have found them to be an effective method of making their voices heard with their elected officials.
- ***Bullying and Safe Schools*** – bullying is a serious threat to children whether the affected child is the bully or the one being bullied. Learn strategies to take back to your school to help you deal with this common and difficult problem.
- ***Legislative Update*** – find out about education legislation being considered in the SC General Assembly.

Thanks to our co-sponsors:

P a r e n t w i s e

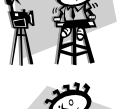
A federally funded program of Voices for South Carolina's Children

SC Department of Education

Office of Safe Schools and Youth Services

Center for Truancy and Dropout Prevention

AARP South Carolina



SICs IN ACTION!

SIC Spring Regional Conferences

Registration Form

Check the Date and Location You Plan To Attend

- _____ Feb. 26 - Mt. Pleasant - Holiday Inn Patriots Point (**Registration/Cancellation Deadline: February 18**)
_____ March 5 - Greenville - Greenville Marriott (**Registration/Cancellation Deadline: February 25**)
_____ March 19 - Columbia - Columbiana Hotel & Conference Ctr. (**Registration/Cancellation Deadline: March 11**)

Name _____

☐ Parent ☐ Teacher ☐ Administrator ☐ Student ☐ Community Member ☐ Other _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Daytime Phone _____

Email address _____

District _____ School _____ Other _____

\$15 Registration Fee includes lunch and materials. Please make checks payable to SC-SIC. No cash or credit cards accepted. Fee will be refunded if the cancellation date is met. You may send a substitute if you cannot attend. Please contact SC-SIC if you have any special needs.

Please mark method of payment below:

☐ Check or money order enclosed / will bring

☐ District and / or school to pay fee - must include Purchase Order # _____

I understand that I am responsible for ensuring final payment of my registration fee regardless of attendance. I also understand that it is my responsibility to make arrangements with the District or School if I expect them to pay my registration fee.

Participant's Signature _____

Please copy this form as needed and send one registration form for EACH person attending.

QUESTIONS? Call 800-868-2232 or 803-777-7658
Please **FAX** completed form to: 803-777-0023 or **MAIL** to:
SC-SIC, College of Education, Wardlaw 001, USC, Columbia, SC 29208

No on-site registrations, please!!
No **FAXED** or **MAILED** registrations accepted after deadlines listed above.

Important: your registration will be confirmed by email or phone. If you do not receive a confirmation by the day before the conference you should contact the SC-SIC.

Guidelines for SIC Advocacy

School Improvement Councils are constantly seeking new avenues to improve their local school in particular and public education in general. Entering into a dialogue with those elected officials who are responsible for creating public education policy and practice is one of the avenues your SIC may decide to travel.

All citizens have the right to speak their minds on any issues they choose with their elected officials. However, there are some ethical concerns when citizens who are members of a body convened by the government, such as an SIC, wish to speak out on political issues, especially if those issues are seen as partisan. To help you stay within ethical boundaries as you plan your advocacy activities, SC-SIC has prepared the following guidelines.

- SIC members do not give up their First Amendment rights as public citizens when they are elected or appointed to the SIC; however, they must be aware of their obligations as council members when speaking publicly on partisan issues. Remember that sometimes it isn't WHAT you say, but HOW you say it.
- Check with your district office to determine if there is policy in place regarding the involvement of SICs in advocacy efforts with elected officials.
- Remember that the SIC's core responsibility is the school improvement plan. When assessing what issues the SIC should be involved in, be sure the issue is relevant to the improvement of your school.
- SICs may pass resolutions if they choose to do so.
- SICs are free to present information about policy issues so long as they present multiple sides of the issues. Be aware that if information regarding an issue is disseminated for one point of view, the SIC must be prepared to disseminate information from others who have a differing view.
- Public money must not be spent to advocate for the passage or defeat of legislation. SICs typically have no budget and must be sure that they do not use school supplies, equipment, or postage to distribute partisan information. Mail the information or find some other method of dissemination. Do not use school computers to send partisan emails.
- Do not send politically oriented information home with the students.
- Your PTA/O or Booster Club is not a government body and may advocate for politically sensitive topics as they choose.
- SICs do not endorse candidates for public office. They can provide opportunities for candidates to present their positions, such as a candidate forum, but care must be taken to ensure that ALL candidates have an equal opportunity to present.
- Citizens have the right and the responsibility to communicate their positions regarding public education to their elected officials. If the SIC has a concern about speaking out publicly as a group, they could opt to send information as a group of individuals rather than as the official SIC.

Please contact our office at 800-868-2232 for further guidance. And please express your thoughts, concerns and needs regarding public education to your elected officials. Public participation in government keeps our democracy strong!

Approved November 16, 2004 by SC-SIC Board of Trustees

SIC Action Timeline



January/February

- Strategic planning participation continues
- Analyze School Report Card information
- Inform parents about School Report Card data
- Receive updates on improvement plan progress
- Attend school board meetings
- Monitor education legislation in General Assembly
- Plan to send a team to regional SIC conference

March/April

- Strategic planning participation continues
- Monitor school board budget preparation
- Summarize data about current year's progress
- Organize to write the report to the parents (due April 30)
- Attend regional SIC conference
- Monitor education legislation in General Assembly
- Begin planning for spring SIC elections



FYI...



Council Updates Now on Streaming Video

Council Update, the series of 30 minute programs focused on topics of current interest to SICs, can now be viewed via streaming video. The programs are produced by ETV, which has generously provided the site where the programs may be found. To go directly to the SIC page visit <http://cfmedia.scetv.org/instantreplay/user/sic.cfm> or visit the SC-SIC Web site www.ed.sc.edu/sic and click on SIC Toolkit to find a link to the *Council Update* page. Topics covered during the fall of 2004 include: *Strategic Planning Simplified*; *Who's At the Table? Your SIC Membership*; and *How To Be A Riley Award Winning School*.

SICs Recognized by State Board

The State Board of Education presented volunteer awards to two school improvement councils. Hughes Academy of Science & Technology SIC in Greenville was recognized for developing and implementing a school dress code and a year-long focus on aviation. Saluda Trail Middle School in Rock Hill was recognized for numerous activities including collaboration with other schools, grassroots advocacy work, and participation on the district level in a variety of tasks. **Jeff Nicholson**, a member of the Saluda Trail SIC who also serves on the SC-SIC board, was honored with an individual volunteer award for his exemplary work on behalf of public schools.

Good News!

Implementation of the Education Accountability Act began in 1998 and South Carolina has made a lot of progress in the last six years! Here are just a few of the improvements the state has made. We can be proud of our schools!

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the nation's only ongoing survey of what students know and can do in core academic subjects. South Carolina's 2003 NAEP scores released last month for fourth and eighth graders in math and reading continue the state's trend of outpacing the nation as a whole.

The recently released Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) results indicate an increase in the percentage of students scoring at the proficient and advanced levels in all grades in all subjects (math, language arts, science, and social studies) with the exception of third grade math.

South Carolina has maintained its distinction of having the fastest rate of improvement of SAT scores in the nation while increasing the number of students taking the test to 62%.

South Carolina students continue to improve their mathematics and reading scores on national standardized tests required by No Child Left Behind. For the first time ever, most South Carolina scores increased to the national average.

Spring Conference
Registration Inside!

SC School Improvement Council
USC College of Education
Wardlaw Bldg., Suite 001
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